



National Transportation Safety Board

The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, January 20, 2006

Miami Seaplane Investigation

The investigation of the December 19, 2005, crash of a Grumman G-73T Turbo Mallard seaplane in Miami, Florida, is ongoing. The seaplane, operated by Chalks Ocean Airways, experienced an in-flight breakup shortly after departing for Bimini, Bahamas. Witnesses, photos and video, and examination of the wreckage indicate that the right wing separated in flight, fatally injuring the 2 crewmembers and 18 passengers, including 3 infants.

Originally manufactured in 1947, the seaplane was modified in 1979 to increase the seating capacity from 10 to 17 passengers, and to replace the original engines with turboprop powerplants. The seaplane entered into service with Chalks in 1980.

The recovered wreckage has been moved to a salvage facility, and sections of seaplane structure have been brought to the NTSB Materials Laboratory in Washington, DC, for further examination. Bill English, AS-10, is the investigator-in-charge.

Initial wreckage examination indicated that the right wing separated near the root. Preliminary metallurgical examination has located evidence of fatigue cracking in the lower rear wing spar cap, along the lower wing skin, and on an internal z-stringer. Additional evidence of fatigue cracking has been noted in the corresponding area on the left wing.

The airplane was equipped with a cockpit voice recorder, which was recovered, but the recording was not usable. On December 30, 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration issued an Emergency Airworthiness Directive requiring detailed inspections of the wings of all G-73 seaplanes.



NTSB staff Brian Murphy, AS-40, and Eric Grosz, TDA-1, observe the recovery effort of the Grumman Mallard that crashed on December 19, 2005, in Miami, Florida, killing all 20 persons on board. Others participating in the effort include representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Miami Beach Police Department, the Miami Dade Police Department, Chalks Ocean Airways, and the commercial salvage company. The investigator-in-charge of this accident is Bill English. The Member on scene was Mark Rosenker.

NTSB Welcomes New Board Member, Kathryn (Kitty) O. Higgins



Kathryn O'Leary Higgins was sworn in as the 36th Member of the National Transportation Safety Board on January 3, 2006. Ms. Higgins brings 36 years of experience in the public and private sectors to her new appointment. Most recently, she served as President and CEO of TATC Consulting and was Vice President for Public Policy at the National Trust for Historic Preservation from May 1999 to January 2004.

Previously, Member Higgins served as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor (July 1997–May 1999), Acting Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, and Vice Chair of the Presidential Commission on U.S. Coast Guard Roles and Missions. Her experience further includes service to the White House (February 1995–July 1997), where she served as Assistant to the President and as Secretary to the Cabinet. In that capacity, she worked closely with the NTSB, Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, and Coast Guard on a number of matters, including

the 1996 ValuJet 597 and TWA 800 accidents, formulation and implementation of hazardous materials regulations, increasing inspector staffing, FAA reauthorization, and creation of the NTSB Office of Family Assistance. She was awarded distinguished service medals by the FAA and Coast Guard for her work.

Prior to her service at the White House, Ms. Higgins served as Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Labor (January 1993–February 1995), Chief of Staff to Congressman Sander Levin (January 1986–January 1993), and Senior Legislative Associate and Minority Staff Director with the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (January 1981–January 1986).

Member Higgins was with the White House Domestic Policy Council, serving as Assistant Director for Employment Policy (May 1978–January 1981). She began her career in 1969 as a Manpower Specialist with the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor.

Aviation Official from Taiwan Visits NTSB

Dr. Hong T. Young, Managing Director of the Aviation Safety Council (ASC) of Taiwan, visited the Safety Board on January 17 and 18 as he assumes his new duties. He replaces the retiring Managing Director, Dr. Kay Yong. The ASC of Taiwan was formed in 1998 as an independent government agency responsible for aviation accident and incident investigation and safety promotion. The ASC has worked closely with the Safety Board on a variety of cases including two major accidents of Boeing 747 aircraft, the in-flight breakup of China Airlines flight 611, and the loss of Singapore Airlines flight 006 during takeoff on a runway under construction. Dr. Young will represent Taiwan as a member of the International Transportation Safety Association (ITSA), currently chaired by the Safety Board.



International Consumer Electronics Show

Speaking at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, Acting NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker urged the consumer electronics industry to help reduce the tragic toll of deaths and injuries on the nation's roadways by bringing technology to bear on the problem of "distracted drivers." Rosenker said that the industry had "a rare and dramatic opportunity to directly improve safety" by addressing driver distraction—both individually and in cooperation with government agencies and academia.

Citing recent NTSB road accident investigations, Rosenker noted, "the driving environment has gotten more complex, making it more challenging to successfully accomplish the driving task." In the short term, Rosenker stated, there are technologies that can improve safety in the driving environment. Adopting these safety enhancements and making them readily available to consumers should be an industry priority, he said.

Rosenker also highlighted the need to reduce the distractions for some of our most vulnerable drivers, those young drivers who are learning how to drive and for whom crash rates are higher than for any other age group. He noted that the NTSB has recommended that teen drivers, while operating under the graduated drivers licensing programs found in almost every state, not be permitted to use wireless communication devices while driving, reflecting that "novice drivers are in the process of learning a very complex task" and often lack the ability to judge the risks associated with that task.

Rosenker stressed that the NTSB did not want to restrict everyone's use of cell phones or other electronic devices. The Safety Board's aim, he said, is to encourage the safe and responsible use of these devices by all drivers, while protecting our novice drivers. In the longer term, the answer to driver distraction lies in "addressing human factors in all phases of product design, development, and deployment," said Rosenker. He called for close cooperation with researchers attempting to answer basic questions about the driving task and human information processing.

The consumer electronics industry, Rosenker stated, can play an important role in creating systems that give today's challenged drivers "increased functionality, increased convenience, and increased safety."

Confirmation Hearings

On December 20, 2005, Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker and Member Katherine O. Higgins were unanimously confirmed by the Senate, enabling Rosenker to begin a second term as a member of the Board and starting Higgins's first term. Acting Chairman Rosenker's new term continues through December 31, 2010. Member Higgins's term continues through December 31, 2009.



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